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ABSTRACT

This report proposes that the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges take four actions regarding provisions for remedial education of skill deficient adults in California. First, background material indicates that the actions will have both immediate and long-range effects on the provision of remediation in the community colleges and, potentially, comprise a major step toward establishing coherent public policy regarding the provision of remediation by all education segments. Then, historical information, formal recommendations, and rationales for the recommendations are presented. The first recommendation is that the Board of Governors should approve a definition of remediation that identifies the purposes and course levels of remediation and should endorse modifications to the Course Classification System and Title 5 to make them more consistent with the definition. The second recommendation is that the Board should direct staff to develop guidelines for determining what levels of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction are equivalent to standards applied in English for remedial instruction. The third recommendation is that the board should continue to seek legislation to authorize the implementation, funding, and evaluation of matriculation. The final recommendation sets forth areas to be addressed in a major initiative for establishing public policy regarding the provision of remedial instruction and services. (AYC)

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PROPOSALS FOR BOARD POLICIES AND ACTIONS CONCERNING REMEDIATION IN THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
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AGENDA ITEM 2

JC 850 210

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Board of Governors of the
California Community Colleges
May 30-31, 1985

Item 2

Title: Proposals for Board Policies and Actions Concerning Remediation in the California Community Colleges

Staff Presentation: Ronnald W. Farland, Administrator
Special Projects

Summary

Staff proposes in this item that the Board take four actions which will have both immediate and long-range effects on the provision of remediation in community colleges and which, together, comprise a potentially significant step toward establishing coherent public policy regarding the provision, by all education segments, of remediation to meet the needs of skill deficient adults in California.

Recommended Action

The Educational Policy Committee should recommend that the full Board approve Recommendations 1-4 as presented in the item.

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Background

Over the past two years, the Board has reviewed and discussed a number of documents and staff reports concerning the provision of remediation in postsecondary education. In April 1985, the Board reviewed, as information, a comprehensive staff analysis and recommendations concerning remediation, based upon a task force report on the subject, as well as upon field comments on that report. The April staff analysis is attached as Appendix A.

This item proposes that the Board take four actions which will have both immediate and long-range effects on the provision of remediation in the community colleges and which, potentially, comprise a major step toward establishing coherent public policy regarding the provision, by all education segments, of remediation to meet the needs of skill deficient adults in California. The four proposed actions are set out below.

A Uniform Definition of Remediation

Recommendation 1 of the Board agenda item, "Proposals for Strengthening the Associate Degree," establishes, in terms of levels of the curriculum structure, which courses may be awarded credit toward the associate degree. A corollary effect of that action is to declare uniformly for the first time that credit courses below the degree applicable levels are, by definition, remedial. That action in itself addresses significant issues related to remediation insofar as it: 1) prohibits the current practice of awarding degree or transfer credit for remedial work, and 2) will result in improved data on enrollments and costs for remedial courses and, as a consequence, improved evaluation.

As a complement to the action in that item, it is proposed here that the Board also approve as policy a uniform definition of remediation for community colleges. This action would have the additional effects of: 1) declaring for the first time that the sole purpose of providing remediation, when it is offered in the credit mode, is "...to assist students to attain those learning skills necessary to succeed in college transfer, certificate and degree courses and programs;" and 2) providing a qualitative definition of the range of instruction and services necessary to meet the needs of the diverse student community. Finally, in concert with a second, related recommendation, it will make it possible in the future to classify English as a Second Language (ESL) courses using standards equivalent to those of other disciplines. This is a necessary prior task because there currently is no commonly agreed-upon basis for structuring the curriculum of ESL.

Recommendation 1: The Board of Governors should approve the definition of remediation below and direct staff to propose modifications to the Course Classification System and other necessary amendments to Title 5 that are consistent with the definition.

> *Remediation is that process which is designed to assist students to attain those learning skills necessary to succeed in college transfer, certificate or degree courses and programs,*

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and includes classroom instruction as well as other support services interventions to assist students in the pursuit of their educational goals and objectives. Remedial instruction includes courses designed to develop reading or writing skills at or below the level required for enrollment in English courses one level below English 1A, computational skills required in mathematics courses below Elementary Algebra and English as a Second Language courses at levels consistent with those defined for English.

Recommendation 2: The Board should direct staff, in consultation with the Chancellor's Task Force on ESL and the colleges generally, to develop guidelines for determining what levels of ESL are equivalent to the standards applied in English for determining what is and is not remedial.

Evaluating Remedial Courses

Many of the public policy issues concerning remediation in the postsecondary segments revolve around the question of whether it is feasible for colleges to attempt to remediate adults who have not even mastered skills levels traditionally viewed as the domain of elementary or high schools. Conventional wisdom suggests to some that an adult who has not previously mastered arithmetic or who reads at the 7th grade level is not likely to develop college level skills in any reasonable period of time. Yet colleges which in recent years have mounted substantial programs to remediate such students are persuaded by their experience that they have been successful. At the same time, systematically gathered evaluation data to document whether such programs can or cannot succeed are in short supply. The April staff analysis chronicled recent and on-going staff activities to improve the colleges' ability to systematically evaluate their remedial courses. Those efforts should continue in order that individual colleges may have a sound basis for their own curriculum review and development. In the meantime, however, there is need to address major public policy questions as to which segments can or ought to provide what levels of remediation. In order to do so, a significant number of colleges must have the capacity and resources first to assess and place students into appropriate level remedial courses and then to monitor their progress through various levels of remediation into and through college level programs. Implementation of a full matriculation process, as set forth in the Student Matriculation Plan adopted by the Board last year, would provide that capacity. Therefore, staff proposes the following Board action:

Recommendation 3: The Board should continue to seek legislation to authorize the implementation, funding and evaluation of matriculation, and give priority in funding to colleges that agree to participate in a state-level evaluation of matriculation which includes evaluation of remedial courses, and which commit to providing feedback to high schools concerning the skills levels and performance of their former students.

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Segmental Roles in Providing Remediation

All of the documents reviewed previously by the Board on the subject of remediation make clear that public policy concerns in the area are by no means limited to those that pertain to community colleges or only to California. The lack of basic computational and language skills among adults is a major societal problem, and the educational and public policy concerns it raises are so numerous and complex, even in California alone, that no single educational segment is capable of adequately addressing them. Massive efforts are needed to improve the preparation of students coming from elementary and high schools. In addition, this state will continue for the foreseeable future to have large and growing numbers of adults who, for a variety of reasons, have not had the benefits of a high school education. The challenge of providing the skills needed by these persons in order that they may be productive citizens will require unprecedented cooperation among all educational segments. And all of this attention to remediation must be accomplished while preserving the quality of collegiate level instruction and be delivered in ways that are efficient and fiscally feasible. Therefore, rather than proposing that short-term, stop-gap actions be taken unilaterally by community colleges, staff proposes that an intersegmental mechanism be utilized to address not only the issues that have already been raised about appropriate segmental roles, but also to consider new ways of thinking about how the public educational segments can work together to meet a major societal need. The guidelines proposed by the Task Force on Academic Quality in its "preferred approach to determining segmental roles" provide a useful basis for this effort.

Recommendation 4: The Board of Governors should direct the Chancellor to develop and present to the California Round Table on Educational Opportunity a major initiative for establishing coherent public policy regarding the provision of remedial instruction and services to meet the needs of skill deficient adults in California. The initiative should include, but not be limited to, proposals to:

1. *jointly develop proposed state policy for providing remediation and mechanisms to implement it on a regional intersegmental basis. The "preferred approach" of the Task Force on Academic Quality should be used as a basis for this effort;*

2. *support a joint, comparative study of remediation in community colleges and adult schools and use the results as a basis for reviewing and, as necessary, amending state policy;*

3. *establish an intersegmental work group to identify and review assessment and diagnostic testing practices in the schools and colleges and make recommendations to the Round Table regarding how to improve effectiveness, efficiency and coordination; and*

4. *review the current operations of the California Articulation Council and, if appropriate, expand the functions and funding to include not only the development of articulation agreements in discipline areas, but also the promulgation of such agreements through the conduct of regional, intersegmental workshops by discipline; and*

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5. seek increased funding to support expanded, intersegmental efforts, such as the California Academic Partnership Program, to improve high school preparation and articulation of high school and college curricula.

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